

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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TAGS: ELAB PINS ECON AFSP IS

SUBJ: CIVIL SERVANTS CANCEL APRIL 8 STRIKE

REF: TEL AVIV 2444

1. FOLLOWING LAST MINUTE EFFORTS BY HISTADRUT AND SECRETARY OF CIVIL SERVICE UNION CHAYIM BERNSTEIN TO PREVENT STRIKE OF SOME 20,000 CIVIL SERVANTS IN THE MINISTRIES OF FINANCE AND OF POST AND COMMUNICATIONS, THE STRIKE LEADERS AGREED TO CANCEL THEIR STRIKE CALL FOR APRIL 8 AND THUS AVOID AN IMMEDIATE SHOWDOWN WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

2. BOTH GOVERNMENT AND HISTADRUT OFFICIALS ARE NOW OPTIMISTIC THAT THEY CAN AVOID THE WIDER CIVIL SERVICE STRIKE SET FOR APRIL 21 THROUGH SOME AS YET UNSPECIFIED COMPROMISE FORMULA (REFTEL). THE STRIKES WERE CALLED TO PROTEST THE BARKAI COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO TERMINATE THE SPECIAL ALLOWANCE SYSTEM FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AND TO LIMIT WAGE INCREASES TO COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS.

3. HISTADRUT AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS APPEALED TO THE PATRIOTISM OF THE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND ARGUED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BARKAI DECISION WAS STILL UNDER NEGOTIATION AND THUS NOT YET FINAL. HOWEVER, IN THE END THE

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STRIKE LEADERS, WHO APPARENTLY HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR A FACE

SAVING FORMULA, YEILDED WHEN AT THE LAST MOMENT HISTADRUT SECRETARY GENERAL MESHEL INVITED TWO REPRESENTATIVES EACH FROM THE EMPLOYEE GROUPS WHOSE SPECIAL ALLOWANCES ARE THREATENED BY THE BARKAI DECISION AND FROM THOSE DEMANDING THE EXTENSION OF ALLOWANCES TO ALL PUBLIC SERVANTS. HISTADRUT OFFICIALS INDICATED TO LABATT THAT THE STRIKE LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO REALIZE THAT PRESENT BUDGET RESTRAINTS MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOI TO MAKE SUBSTANTIAL SALARY CONCESSIONS. IN THE END AN UNNECESSARY STRIKE WOULD EXPOSE THEIR WEAK POSITION AND WOULD GET THEM NO MORE THAN THEY COULD GET THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. IN THE MEANTIME A PROLONGED SHOWDOWN WITH THE GOVERNMENT WOULD DIVIDE THEIR MEMBERS AND TURN THE PUBLIC AT LARGE SOLIDLY AGAINST THEM. MOREOVER, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SOON INVOKE EMERGENCY MEASURES FOR RESTORING AT LEAST VITAL POSTAL AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES.

4. HISTADRUT OFFIIALS TOLD US THAT MINISTRY OF FINANCE NOW APPEARS READY TO APPROVE TOKEN WAGE INCREASES BOTH IN 1976 AND 1977 AND MAY BE WILLING TO EXTEND THE PERIOD FOR ELIMINATING THE SPECIAL ALLOWANCES FROM TWO TO FOUR STEPS OVER TWO YEAR PERIOD. HISTADRUT IS ALSO POINTING OUT HTAT INTERNAL PROMOTIONS AND THE SENIORITY INCREASE SYSTEM COULD BE USED TO ADJUST INTERNAL SALARY INEQUITIES.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EVENTUAL STRIKE OVER THE BARKAI DECISION CANNOT YET BE RULED OUT, NOTHING IS NOW LIKELY TO HAPPEN UNTIL AFTER PASSOVER. MOREOVER, THE FACT THAT THE STRIKE LEADERS AGAINST ALL EXPECTATIONS HAD BACKED DOWN WOULD INDICATE THAT THEY ARE NO LONGER AS SURE OF THEIR RANK AND FILE SUPPORT AS THEY HAD BEEN BEFORE.
TOON

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